

PROJECT PROPOSAL

Date of Request: July 1, 2020

Project Name: Upper South Fork Slater Fish Barrier

Location: Hahns Peak/Bears Ears Ranger District, Routt County, MBRTB

Project Contact Person: Rick Henderson, (970) 870-2219, rick.henderson@usda.gov

Reports Due: August 15, 2020

Planned Project Implementation Date: Fall 2020.

Project Description: The Upper South Fork Slater Creek contains a conservation population of Colorado River cutthroat trout (CRCT) occupying 3.6 miles of stream. A natural falls has effectively isolated the CRCT upstream and protected them from invasion by non-native brook trout that occur downstream.

Surveys conducted in July 2019 found that a tree had fallen into the channel resulting in the development of two side-channels around the falls. Fish sampling found seven brook trout that had successfully navigated upstream around the falls and into the CRCT population. Forest Service, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and Trout Unlimited staff are proposing to construct a barrier approximately 30 meters upstream of the falls. Constructing the project prior to winter 2020 would stop further movement of brook trout into the population.

The project is located 50 meters for NFSR 110. Surveys should include the entire project area which ~ 0.8 hectares.

Purpose/Need: The purpose of this project is protect a CRCT population from an imminent threat of invasion by non-native brook trout.

Proposed Action: Initial surveys have been completed and a description of the 30% design is included. The design team will continue to refine the design during July and August, 2020 which would include recommendations from resource specialist. That said, the barrier location, project area, and extent of disturbance are not expected to change.

The barrier would be formed by constructing a log wall across the stream, effectively making a waterfall that fish could not jump over. More specifically, the barrier would meet the following criteria:

- Create a ≥ 4.0 -foot water surface-to-invert drop at the low-flow pour-over.
- Prevent plunge pool depth from exceeding 1.0 foot.
- Prevent fish from “outflanking” or swimming around the barrier.
- Meet criteria 1-3 through at least the 100-year discharge event.

Wood for barrier construction would either be trucked to the site or alternatively, cut on site. If on site trees are used, up to twelve conifer trees would be cut within the project area, limbed, and two sides

planed flat. The excavator would then move the logs to the barrier site with two end suspension when feasible. Approximately 10 aspen trees would be removed to make an access route from the road. All unused tree material would be scattered and left on site.

- Excavator, chainsaw, power tools, and hand tools would be used to construct the project.
- Eight-inch flexible pipe would be used to bypass flows around the site during construction.
- Fish within the project area would be removed by electrofishing (CPW staff) prior to de-watering.
- Approximately 110 feet of stream channel would be impacted during the project. This includes:
 - a temporary dam to divert flows
 - removal of large rocks to use around the structure
 - excavation of streambed for 40 feet downstream of the barrier to lower the streambed elevation up to two feet and construct the splash pad for 10 feet below the barrier.
 - Excavate a trench across (perpendicular to) the stream, six feet wide, three feet below the current streambed elevation, and extending ten feet into both streambanks.
 - excavated material would be placed immediately upstream of the barrier so that the streambed elevation is the same elevation at the top log at the pour over.
- After excavation, logs will be placed in the trench, screws used to secure logs together, fabric stapled to the upstream side of logs, and then backfilled with excavated material.
- Logs would extend across the channel and embedded 15 feet in the streambanks on both sides.
- The barrier logs would begin two feet below the streambed elevation and extend up to an elevation one foot higher than bankfull flows. Logs would be placed directly on top of each other. Logs would be approximately 30 feet long at the bottom and increase to 45 feet near the top.
- Large rocks or precast concrete slabs would be placed in the stream channel below the barrier to prevent erosion and formation of a pool.

The following design elements have been used in previous fish barrier NEPA projects and may be applicable for this project.

- Botany: Wash excavator before entering project area.
- Botany: Conceal excavator tracks to the extent possible.
- Botany, Fish, Wildlife: If specific impacts from the actions to threatened, endangered, and Region 2 sensitive species (TES) and/or their habitats are identified, management may be adjusted as necessary to reduce those impacts through working with the biologists or botanists.
- Botany and Fish: A revegetation plan for the project site including willow plantings etc., should be identified and implemented prior to the first snowfall.
- Fire and Fuels: All personnel and equipment will adhere to any fire restriction requirements in place while operating on the forest.
- Hydrology: All slash will be piled outside of the riparian area.
- Hydrology: Final design plans will be reviewed by a hydrologist prior to construction.

Decision to be Made: If no Extraordinary Circumstances are identified the responsible official will determine if this action may be categorically excluded from further NEPA documentation as provided for in FSH 1909.15, Section 32.2 – Categories of Actions for Which a Project or Case File and Decision Memo Are required, under *Category 36 CFR 220.6(e)(6): Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities which do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than one mile of low standard road construction (Service level D, FSH 7709.56).*

Location(s) & How to Access Area(s):

From Craig, Colorado, take highway 13 north approximately 13 miles, turn right onto Moffat County Road 27/NFSR 110 and continue for approximately 22 miles. Park at the trailhead for NFST 1144. The project area begins 100 meters north of the project area.

Specialist Input: Consultants will provide reports for wildlife, botany, cultural resources, and hydrology.

Project Timeline:

- Specialist Reports: Due August 15th, 2020.
- Decision Memo: August 21, 2020
- Implementation: Fall 2020

Project Area Description:

Legal Description:

- The project is located in T10 N, R88W, Sec 20. UTM coordinates are 306829 4519818 13N

Roadless Areas: None

HUC 6 Watershed: South Fork Slater Creek

Appendix A: Extraordinary circumstances necessary for a Categorical Exclusion

The following language is included in the Decision Memo. Specialist Reports need to conclude whether each of these statements are accurate for their resources or make changes if necessary.

I find that there are no extraordinary circumstances that would warrant further analysis and documentation in an EA or EIS. I took into account resource conditions identified in agency procedures that should be considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances might exist:

*Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species – The **company name** Wildlife Biologist and **company name** Botanist and Forest Service Fish Biologist evaluated this project and had **no concerns or issues with regard to Federally listed species or critical habitat, or any proposed species or critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species**. The project is designed to have a long-term benefit for Colorado River cutthroat trout which are a Region 2 sensitive species.*

Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds – There will be no affect to these resources assuming the proposed action and design criteria are followed.

American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites – There are no known areas of significance to Native Tribal communities within the area of potential effect (APE) for the project. In previous communications regarding this project implementation, no concerns have been raised. There is no potential to affect such cultural resources during project implementation.

*Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas – On **XXX, 2020**, **business name** archaeologist*

John Doe conducted an intensive inventory of the project's APE, to evaluate the potential of the A Class III Cultural Resource Inventory of the Upper South Fork Slater Fish Barrier (R2016020601003) to effect historic properties. No cultural resources were identified during the 13.5 acre survey.

As no historic properties were identified and the survey is less than 160 acres, this project is will be submitted to the CO SHPO under Section C.3 of the Programmatic Agreement among the Colorado State Historic Preservation Officer and the USDA Forest Service ... Regarding the Reporting of Negative Results Cultural Resource Inventories, fulfilling the Agency's obligations under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, and its implementing regulations 36 CFR 800.

Appendix B: Project location maps, photo of a similar barrier, site photo's, and initial survey graphs.

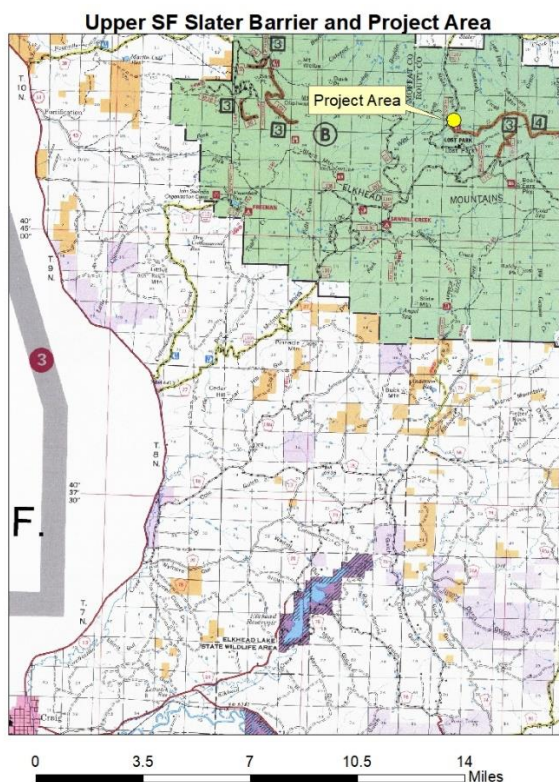


Photo of a similar barrier design constructed on a smaller stream.



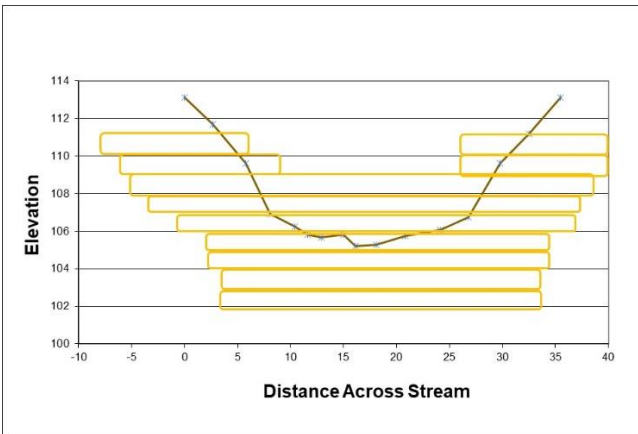
The barrier location is just upstream of the person and dog.



Looking across the channel at the Barrier Location.



Channel cross-section at the barrier location and cartoon of where logs would be placed to create the barrier.



Longitudinal profile of the stream channel at the site showing existing and proposed streambed elevations.

